The following is a transcription of an interview between Jose Ramos-Horta, external representative of the National Council of Maubere Resistance, and Lorne Rider. The interview took place in New York City on Wednesday, March 13, 1992. Mr. Ramos-Horta has generously given his permission to circulate via electronic media, this interview in which he speaks very frankly (and in some cases touches on sensitive issues). He asks that anyone wishing to publish anything longer than short excerpts request his permission first.

The interview begins in the middle of Mr. Ramo's Horta's comments on the Lusitania Expresso, since the initial part was not recorded. He also speaks about Amos Wako's report, the ins and outs of UN politics, Timorese ethnicity and external leadership, external factional politics and prospects, and the Timor Gap treaty.

PLEASE NOTE: I WAS NOT CAREFUL IN SPELLING PORTUGUESE NAMES IN THIS TRANSCRIPTION.

JRH:

Of course two months to put up a mission like that is truly remarkable. And it shows that when the bloody Portuguese government wants to be involved in something like that they can. Because it was in fact very much backed by the government, although publicly they would deny it. There is no way they could have pulled out so much money without making phone calls. I know the Portuguese businessman, they would never... the government told them, "well, you'll get a tax break..." If anything it shows that if they want they can get the money. Half a million. A million. My only criticism is it should have been properly rehearsed, the showdown. You know you prepare things for the most basic scenarios. Before, when I was at the UN, I had three, four, five scenarios. I always go for the worst case scenario, and I have a plan for the worst case scenario. So what they could have done is -- well, it was clear from the very beginning that the Indonesians were not going to sink the boat. It was clear that there were two things they would have done. At the worst, everyone would have been taken to Ataruo Island, would be quarantined, they'd confiscate the boat. More likely, and you could even judge from the words of the captain, they would board the ship and arrest the captain, and take it to international waters towards Australia. So, they should have gone to the edge, refused to leave, shown the security council resolution, and start arguing with the captain...

LR: I absolutely agree with you. The students were all very disappointed it was over so quickly.

JRH:

That is the negative side of it. There were all these students, and then you know, suddenly, it fell. It didn't cause much resentment in Timor. Xanana in a letter that just came out a few days ago, he said "Please if you want to organize delegations, do it only if they really do come. It is even worse if they say they are coming and they don't come." He was referring mainly to the Portuguese Parliamentary mission. But I don't there is any negative reaction. He sent something for the captain of the ship. A souvenir from Falintil, plus something else...It means that they have respect for the exercise...You know the Indonesians were arresting a lot of people, demonstrations were being prepared, even against my advice. I said, "don't do any demonstrations." My argument was, of course we all know the mission is political. But if you do a demonstration it will be accused of being a political mission. Of course what the Indonesians want is to draw you out into the light, to capture you more, so don't do anything. But in spite of this, they were organizing, preparing posters, its unbelieveble how ambitious they

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are. Soon after the massacre, when Amos Wako went there in January, they were already prepering demonstrations. But, I know it from a letter sent to Xanana asking for his approval for the wording about the UN, about Indonesia, in English and Portuguese. But they had no time to do it because the visit was sudden, not to mention the incredible security apparatus.

LR: Have you seen Amos Wako's report?

JRH:

No. I have a friend [name and position deleted]. He will try to get me a copy. It would be a scandal. It is an official document, and no one will know how it came out.

LR: Why aren't they allowed to release something like that?

JRH:

It's the nature of the mandate. Wako went there to report to the Secretary-General, not to the General Assembly, not to the Commission on Human Rights. The SG can do whatever he wants with that report. But what we should do in the next GA meeting, is request that the SG make the report of his special envoy available to the commission.

LR: As a neophyte to UN politics, I am amazed at the little steps that constitute a victory.

JRH:

Yes. Every year we are on constant, constant lookout, constant, constant maneuvering. And we have to play that game. Let's say I don't get a hold of this document and I don't get the SG to release it through pressure from Portugal or other African countries--if the report is released, the victory is because it could be front page in the New York Times or the Washington Post and that would be a major tactical victory. But the report is very damaging, and if he decides to release it, it is already a big political gesture. Because it would mean that in his mind he is thinking, "well I have to do something." Because he is very close friends with Ali Alatas. I don't think that on his own he will release it. It has to be asked by some very important forces. The French will make a difference. He's very close to the French, who were the first to support him to become SG.

He's very very much in the hands of Washington. This Brazilian friend of mind who is a liberal-conservative, a very decent guy, was telling me today that he doesn't want to be part of a UN that is controlled by only one power. He said that in the past, the UN was lop-sided, but now it's worse, now there is only one power controlling it. He said, "I have some ideals, and I don't want to be part of it. And he is quite senior--he'll be appointed, if he doesn't leave, under the assistant secretary general. For someone like that to say, "yes I'm leaving..." But it won't be bad for his conscience.

LR: Japan, the US, Canada, and Australia were able to lobby for the weak consensus declaration rather than a resolution. How do they do that? Is it open?

JRH:

No, behind the scenes. They go to the members of the commission, saying they'd like a consensus declaration. They spread rumors in the corridors, "we don't agree with a resolution." And other countries get worried that without US support, it will not be

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adopted. And people don't want to be associated with something that is going to be defeated. All the American, the Japanese, say "we favor a consensus statement." If the Japanese favor a consensus statement, other countries are discouraged, because it means the Japanese are going vote against the resolution.

LR: It has provided a forum for further discussion in the next GA, though.

JRH: Yes, as you say, if that was a victory, we have to be happy. But I wasn't happy. I tore apart the declaration because it was partly, to a great measure, due to Portuguese incompetence that we got the statement instead of a resolution. The problem with the Portuguese is that they talk, talk, talk--they don't listen to people. They love to listen to their stupid voices. I kept warning them that I've been dealing with the Indonesians for the past sixteen years. While you people were sleeping in UN for many, many years. I know how they operate. At the last minute the Portuguese announced that they supported the declaration. The Portuguese were betting on the notion that the Indonesians would never accept the content, and hence we would win, because we forced a vote on the resolution, and they'd look good because they'd negotiated, and the Indonesians were the one's who didn't accept the content of the resolution. I kept warning them that's not the case. Stupid bastards.

LR: You seem to have a love/hate relationship with the Portuguese. You have a low opinion of them but yet they are the only ones who are doing anything.

JRH:

There are half a dozen people who are good. They have this incredible fault that they talk and talk.

LR:

What do you think the Portuguese motives regarding Timor are? What would happen if they become the effective administering power?

JRH:

If I had to choose between Portugal and Indonesia, I'd choose Portugal. At least with Portugal I can abuse them. But I don't think Portugal would be able to be a power in the territory again. It would be one of the conditions for Indonesia to accept, there has to be some way out of it.

LR: I'm curious about Timorese ethnicity. It always seems to me that the external leaders of the resistance tend to look more Portuguese. Is that just because of the higher access to education of the mestizos, or whatever the term is?

JRH:

The majority of the external leaders are indigenous Timorese. Within Fretilin, I'm the only one who is mixed race. Abilo Arujuo is Mambai. Jose Gutteres is from Viqueque. That goes for UDT as well. Joao Carrascallao is mixed raced--his father is Portuguese, but the Secretary General is Timorese. The former president of UDT is also Timorese. There is a myth that was perpetuated since '75 saying that the majority of the Timorese leaders were mixed race, but it's not true. Within the Fretilin leadership, maybe half a dozen are of mixed-race out of dozens of leaders. In UDT, at the beginning, quite a few were of mixed race, but the explanation is that the mixed races had higher access to education. East Timor is very homogeneous. 95% of the population is indigenous.

LR: How about the concept "Maubere?" How was what was considered a pejorative term for the Mambai get turned around?

JRH:

Well, that was my idea. The whole notion of Maubere was concocted by me, for two reasons. One, being a social-democrat from the beginning, but realizing that social democracy was not easily explainable to the common people, I had to concoct something that could resemble my vision of social democracy. Social democracy could be argued to fit into Timorese traditional society, structures, and philosophy and so on. In communal life, in tribal life, everything was done on a democratic basis. The elders debated and discussed, and decisions were made by consensus, and there was a lot of sharing of work and so on. So there was a mixed economy and democracy, and social democracy was more adjusted to local conditions. But, at the same time, there was the need to develop something that would catch the imagination of the people. Of course, at that time I had never set foot in New York, let alone knowing about Madison Avenue tactics. But my political intuition suggested that you had to catch a phrase, and idea which would mean everything for the people.

And of course myself, even though I'm of mixed race, even though I'm part of the system of privilege, to the extent of what a privileged person is in Timor. I was born and grew up barefoot. For years and years had starvation meals. Morning breakfast, lunch, morning lunch, dinner, was corn. Nothing else. No milk, no bread. The first language I spoke was Tetun. But still, as I said in my book, the fact that you are a child of a white man is alone a degree of privilege. As I grew up, my dream was to be accepted by colonial society. It was such a shock to me when one day, when I was working as a radio presenter, a top Portuguese official told me, "when you speak normally, you are ok, but when you speak on the radio, your accent sounds like a Maubere." It was the crumbling of my dreams! After so much effort, I'm still a Maubere? It was something like, return to the source. I said, my God, these bastards don't accept me.

Then one day I wrote an article for a Catholic quarterly, and it was closed down because of that article, and I'm proud of it, and the editor was Monseigneur Loppes, for whom I have great respect. The article was an open letter to "Maubere, My Brother." It went on, it was a bit poetic, and it ended like this: "Maubere, the sun is rising. It's rays, it's light is also for you. Wake up. It's time." The Governor called me to his house. He was furious. He could have killed me right there. And he became even more furious when I gave him a stupid explanation when he asked "What do you mean with this 'wake up'?" And I said "Mr. Governor, you know the Timorese, we are lazy, we don't like to work,"--because that's what they always thought--so I told him the article meant wake up and go to work. My God he was furious. He said "do you think I'm stupid? Are you joking?" I said "no, I'm just encouraging them to work." But I knew that by using "Maubere" everyone would associate with us. And it caught like fire. Everywhere in Timor. So it was turned around as an affirmation of pride and nationality and dignity. And ever since everyone in East Timorese uses it with pride. Some in UDT called it an insult. But they are more Portuguese than the Portuguese. Black Skin, white mask. Xanana Gusmao talks all the time about Maubere people, Maubere soul. Because yes there is a Maubere soul. The peasant, the poor, the fighters. Of course Joao Carrascalao, they don't have a fucking Maubere soul. They have a white soul, or they are totally confused.

LR: Obviously there is still a lot of antagonism between Fretilin and UDT. What are the prospects after signing the joint CNRM communique which depoliticized the resistance for seriously putting all that aside?

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JRH:

You have to distinguish between the two UDTs. The one we signed the agreement with is based in Lisbon, led by Paolo Pirres, and then there is a UDT in Australia led by Joao Carrascallao. I don't think it is possible for anyone to work with Mr. Joao Carrascallao. He seems to have an attitude bigger than his physique. Who is Mr. Carrascallao anyway? He represents nothing, a few people, former fortunares publicos. Mr. Joao Carrascallao is a very good person as a human being. When you want to organize a barbecue with him with tons and tons of beer and drink yourself to death, he is there. But with party politics, he is very, very stubborn. As the Portuguese say, [Portuguese words], which means uh, "dickhead." With all the others, on behalf of CNRM, with Abilo Arujuo in his capacity with Fretilin and Paulo Pirres as the leader of the Lisbon faction [of UDT], I think the agreement will hold. There will be difficulties in the future, but they know they have no choice either, but to work with the CNRM, because it is the reality today. It is not Fretilin or UDT, it is CNRM. I'm totally in favor of the parties. I'm totally in favor of Fretilin; but a Fretilin that is re-organized, that is young, that is serious, that is professional. The same goes for UDT. If Fretilin and UDT are made up of individuals that are lazy, that are incompetent and constantly bickering for their own personal little pride and so on, if that continues, they know very well that they will be finished. Because the younger generation in Lisbon, in Australia, in Timor and in Bali are fed up. I personally don't have any political ambition. I don't dream to be the next [Bocaso or the next Juan Carlos] of East Timor. I don't care if the external factions are self-destroying, as long as those within East Timor organize and keep fighting.

Because many people still refuse to reorganize, to give room to the younger generation to take charge.

LR: You aren't exactly in your grave yet, either.

JRH:

Yes, but we have been there for fourteen years. Who elected us? There are many who have the qualities of leadership. The problem is, it does not change. It is like leaders for life. The agreement is positive. Politics is made of appearances, of symbolism. The agreement at the moment helps the appearance and the symbolism. There is not much substance to it, because the parties have their own internal conflicts, but because our struggle outside needs the appearance of unity, we signed the agreement, and it might hold.

LR: There might be some difficulties in exile politics, but what about the situation inside East Timor?

JRH:

Well, I would preface by saying that too many people put too much emphasis on the differences within the parties outside, forgetting that is an unavoidable psychological and sociological problem that plagues every other exile group. The farther away you are, the longer you are away from the countries, the more intense the problems are.

But at the same time, there is not much emphasis put on the leadership inside the country. And that is my main concern in the sense that it is the leadership inside the country that has more historical legitimacy. And there inside East Timor, they are solidly united around the National Council of Maubere Resistance, which is under the leadership of Xanana Gusmao. There is no discussion or argument between Fretilin, UDT, Falintil, and so on. There is no

such problem. And this is what is important. Because ultimately, when the time comes for serious negotiations, it will have to be Xanana Gusmao who will have to determine the delegation. When it comes to a plebiscite, it will be decided, obviously, within the country, not by groups in Portugal or Australia, or anywhere else. So this is very important. One positive thing that has happened recently, is the fact that now, everyone outside the country, every group, recognizes the National Council as the leading body in Timor and Xanana as the leader. In spite of the problems that still face each party outside, there is one consensus among everybody, and that is recognize Xanana and the Council. Even Joao Carasscallao, who is not a member of the the agreement, recognized Xanana as the leader of the resistance. So that is positive, and it help the symbolism of unity that is necessary for the diplomatic struggle.

Again, too much emphasis is put on the factionalism. My answer to that is, the Americans are not supporting East Timor, not because Abilio had an argument with Xanana or with Ramos-Horta. They don't even know who Abilio. Or because Joao Carrasscallo is a bit nuts. They don't even know who Carrasscallo is. They don't support us for clear cut strategic, selfish interests. If they decide to change one day, it will not be because of the external leadership. Regardless of the nature of the leadership, when they decide to change, they will do so, and if necessary, they will organize a Timorese leadership themselves.

LR: The Americans?

JRH:

Yes, they organize in the sense that they promote this and that. It was never with any movement, the problem of division or lack of division, the led one government or another to support East Timor. They support for strategic considerations. Once they've made the decision to support a group for strategic considerations, then they will choose which group they will work with that provides them the best guarantees for their own interests, and the guarantees of continuity, stability, and so on. So it worries many people, but it never worried me.

There are many good people in Portugal and Australia. And that is why I have fought, sometimes in a viscous way, against my colleagues of my generation, who I like very much personally, to knock some sense into their brains that the party which they claim to love and support, to survive and be strengthened, needs the new generation. Otherwise the party will dissipate. This is what I'm trying to knock into their f-U-C-K-I-N-G brains. To put it politely.

LR: One last question. What is the CNRM's position on the Timor Gap treaty?

JRH:

The Timor Gap treaty as such, is an excellent treaty between two parties. The only problem is that it was signed by Australia with the wrong party. If and when East Timor achieves its independence, then we could live with the treaty as it stands, with minor modifications.

LR: Is that a policy statement?

JRH: Yes, it's a policy statement.

From : PEACEFUL SYSTEMS 914-428-7383 White Plains NY USA May.22.1992 12:10 AM P07

This was the introduction to the interview as circulated on pt-net:

Date: Wed, 20 May 92 21:01 PDT
Subject: Entrevista de Jose' Ramos Horta
Sender: BARROS@MAX.U.WASHINGTON.EDU

Quando recebi atraves da pt-net pedidos para enviar faxes ao Nightline a sugerir e incentivar uma entrevista a Jose Ramos Horta, nao perdi tempo: no mesmo dia mandei um fax pessoal, e telefonei a membros da Seattle Coalition for Human Rights in East Timor sem acesso a pt-net para que fizessem o mesmo. Agora, depois de ler a entrevista dada por Jose Ramos Horta e publicada nas news, estou a pensar que seria adequado enviar um segundo fax ao Nightline a congratula-los por nao terem convidado JRH, evitando-se assim uma situacao embaracosa para todos nos, os que de ha meses a esta parte tentamos manter o assunto de Timor vivo nas reunioes locais da AI, nas associacoes de estudantes indonesios, na CNN, etc.
De facto, a falta de nivel, que nao de razao, demonstrada por JRH na dita entrevista, e claro indicador de que em vez de ajudar a causa de Timor, a sua presenca no programa so serviria para justificar a desconfianca de muitos relativamente as reais opcoes politicas, sociais e economicas da Fretilin.

Na dita entrevista JRH diz que prefere os Portugueses aos Indonesios porque pelo menos "I CAN ABUSE THEM". Acrescentando mais tarde que os Portugueses nao passam de "STUPID BASTARDS".

ESTE TIPO DE DECLARACAO E INACEITAVEL.

Tanto mais que os portugueses vao estar sentados a mesa de todas as negociacoes. Durante a entrevista varios pontos relativamente a fraqueza da postura governamental portuguesa, a organizacao da viagem de barco, etc, sao levantados com razao. Mas sao evidentes, e QUALQUER pessoa com mais senso de respeito pela dignidade de todas as partes envolvidas, seria capaz de os transmitir de forma mais eficaz.

JRH DEVE SABER QUE O TEMPO DAS AFRONTAS REVOLUCIONARIAS JA SE ACABOU, E QUE CONTRIBUICOES COMO A DESTA ENTREVISTA SAO LAMENTAVEIS.

Timor nao e so mais um problema de violacao de direitos humanos. Timor nao e apenas a responsabilidade historica de reparar os erros de 1975. Timor esteve sempre presente durante os meus tempos de liceu e faculdade, atraves de amigos que tinham familiares na ilha, e para quem, durante os passados 17 anos, medo, fome e perseguicao tem feito parte de conversas telefonicas permeadas de silencios, e cartas cerzidas com segundos sentidos. E Timor tambem e o Jamor.

Critica agressiva, contundente e construtiva e essencial. O abuso e a falta de consideracao sao inuteis,e contraproducentes.

Ana Paula Barros

(the interview followed, in English)

P/ C.I.D.A.C.
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This was a response from José Basto, an ETAN activist at Lehigh Univ.

Date: Thu, 21 May 92 10:38:02 EDT
From: jb00@Lehigh.EDU (JOSE ANTONIO BASTO)
Subject: Comenta'rio a' entrevista de JRHorta
To: pt-net@inesc.inesc.pt

Em relac,a~o a' u'ltima msg da Ana Paula Barros, a minha reacc,a~o foi exactamente a mesma!

Por causa dos meus projectos finais na~o fui 'a confere^ncia de NYC a 12/5 e torci um pe' (com rotura de ligamentos B-(a 13, pelo que me foi impossi'vel ir 'a reunia~o da ETAN/US (East Timor Alert Network) de 17, onde JRH estava presente...

AINDA BEM QUE NA~O FUI! Provavelemente ia ser um grande pe' de vento, pois eu tambe'm acho inadmissi'veis as afirmac,o~es dele...

Compreendo as fustrac,o~es do homem, os problemas que deve ter passado na sua vida, e as presso~es psicolo'gicas a que deve estar sugeito a ver a sua gente a ser abusada, chacinada, etc ...

Mas e' o'bvio que na~o sera' com estas posic,o~es de antagonizac,a~o com Portugal que ele ira' conseguir muitos apoios.

O outro membro da Resiste^ncia Timorense com quem eu estive em Cornell (Jose' Guterrres) parece-me ser uma pessoa muito mais equilibrada, e com um discurso bem mais coerente.

Pobre de Timor, se todos os seus dirigentes fossem como JRH ...

O que tambe'm transparece da "entrevista" e' que os diversos movimentos Timorenses continuam "divorciados"... o que na~o leva a lado nenhum.

Na minha opinia~o, mais vale ignorar o "show off" para "americano ver" deste indivi'duo de pouca educac,a~o e continuar a fazer o possi'vel por Timor, que nunca elegeu este "representante".

Jose' Anto'nio

From : PEACEFUL SYSTEMS 914-428-7383 White Plains NY USA May.22.1992 12:19 AM P01